

Virginia's Early Intervention READING Initiative

The Early Intervention Reading Initiative, which has served either kindergarten or first grade students, was established by the 1997 Virginia Acts of Assembly, Chapter 924, Item 140. In January 2000, Governor Gilmore proposed and the General Assembly passed legislation to expand this reading incentive program to cover grades kindergarten through third.

The goal of the initiative is to reduce the number of children with reading problems through early detection and correction of research-identified emergent and early reading skills.

The Initiative funds a statewide literacy screening instrument that teachers use in the fall to identify children who do not have the early reading skills necessary for success in learning to read.

The Initiative also provides incentive funds for school divisions to provide these students with additional instructional time for intervention services.

The Initiative's funding is a match grant based upon each school division's composite index, their local ability-to-pay. The funding is available to any division that certifies to the Department of Education that an intervention program will be offered to all identified students and that these students will be screened in the spring.



Highlights of Research Supporting the Early Intervention Reading Initiative

- Longitudinal research indicates that students at risk in grade one continue to be at risk in grade four (Juel, 1988) and that the gap between grade-level expectation and actual achievement gets wider each successive year (Stanovich, 1986).
- We have it within our power to make sure that young children learn the alphabetic code and get a good start on the pathway to reading. Early, systematic instruction at a child's instructional level in phonological awareness, the alphabet and letter sounds, concept of word, and word recognition, result in fewer retentions in grade one, fewer Title I referrals in grade two, and fewer remedial readers in grades three and four (Blachman, 1994).
- Despite our best efforts towards exemplary early literacy instruction, there will be a few students who lag behind. For these students, an additional twenty to thirty minutes per day of effective intervention in the early primary grades can prevent hours of costly remediation in the later grades (Lyon, 1996).
- Reading deficiencies in many students can be prevented. It is possible to reduce the proportion of children with reading deficits to 5 percent or lower if these children are recognized early and provided with appropriate intervention (Lyon, 1996; Torgesen, 2000; Scanlon, Vellutino, Small, & Fanuele, 2000).

Components of the Initiative Diagnostic Instrument

Through a grant awarded to the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, the Initiative funds a statewide literacy screening instrument, PALS (Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening) and a PALS Web site.

PALS is designed to measure selected components of the Virginia English Standards of Learning (SOL).



- **PALS K**
 - Rhyme Awareness (SOL K.4, K.7)
 - Beginning Sound Awareness (SOL K.7)
 - Alphabet Knowledge (SOL K.9, K.11)
 - Letter Sound Knowledge (SOL K.4, K.7)
 - Concept of Word (SOL K.5)
 - Word Recognition (SOL 1.5)
- **PALS 1-3**
 - Alphabet Recognition (SOL 1.5)
 - Letter Sounds (SOL 1.6)
 - Concept of Word (SOL 1.5)
 - Sound-to-Letter (SOL 1.4)
 - Blending (SOL 1.6)
 - Word Recognition (SOL 1.6)
 - Spelling (SOL 1.12, 2.4, 3.3)
 - Oral Passage Reading (SOL 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 3.4, 3.6)
- **The PALS Web site** is designed as a teacher-friendly means of entering PALS scores, receiving immediate summary reports, and providing instructional resources based on the PALS screening sections.

Intervention Services

- **An effective intervention of about 20 minutes per day** in early primary grades can fix many reading problems that are very difficult to correct in later grades.
(Dr. Reid Lyon, National Institute of Health)

The **Initiative's funding** is based upon providing additional instructional time, up to 2.5 hours a week, for intervention in a setting with a 5 to 1 pupil teacher ratio.

Intervention services must be **in addition to** and cannot supplant instruction that the child is receiving. Divisions design their own models to provide reading intervention consistent with their current reading programs.

Options for program delivery may include, but are not limited to, the use of reading teachers, speech language pathologists, trained aides, volunteer tutors under the supervision of a certified teacher, the use of aides to instruct in-class groups while the teacher provides direct instruction to the targeted students, or extended instructional time in the school day or year for the targeted students.



Anticipated Benefits of the Initiative

- An improved primary reading program and improved reading skills for Virginia's children.
- A higher percentage of children passing the third grade SOL tests.
- A reduction in number of referrals for special education services.
- A higher percentage of children being promoted in the primary grades.
- A reduction in the number of children requiring remediation in later grades.

For additional information on
**Virginia's
Early Intervention READING Initiative**
visit our Web site at
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us./go/VDOE>
or call the Office of Elementary and
Middle School Instructional Services
at 804-786-3925.

For more information on
PALS
visit the PALS Web site at
<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/pals>
or call the PALS office at 888-882-7257



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